

DRAFT

DRAFT

DRAFT

DRAFT

STRATEGIC CHOICES AND THE NUCLEAR CHALLENGES IN A PRECEIVED WORLD OF REGIONAL STRATEGIC MULTIPOLARITY

**Dr. Willie Curtis
Department of Political Science
United States Naval Academy
Annapolis, Maryland 21402**

**A paper presented at the 2015-ISAC-ISSS Conference in Austin, Texas on 16
November, 2014.**

(Draft, Please do not quote)

STRATEGIC CHOICES AND THE NUCLEAR CHALLENGES IN A PERCEIVED WORLD OF STRATEGIC MULTIPOLARITY

ABSTRACT

“The calculus of deterrence that emerged from the Cold War decades reflected conceptual narrowness because “strategic deterrence” was conceived and evolved in a bipolar international environment dominated by two disparate ideologically-oriented superpowers;” this same calculus of deterrence requires rethinking the logic of deterrence in a world of regional strategic multipolarity. In a twenty-first century world of strategic multipolarity, the question regarding the impact of horizontal nuclear proliferation and national survival may suggest a rethinking of the unthinkable and a reassessment of the strategic choices facing a number of regional states in their decisions to pursue, use, and/ or acquisition of nuclear weapons. Therefore, the task of articulating a policy of strategic deterrence during the Second Decade of the Twenty-First Century is complicated by the evolving nature of the geostrategic environment; an environment that has evolved from strategic bipolarity to unipolarity and now transiting to a strategic regional multipolar global threat environment.”

STRATEGIC CHOICES AND THE NUCLEAR CHALLENGES IN A PERCEIVED WORLD OF REGIONAL STRATEGIC MULTIPOLARITY

In this the second decade of the twenty-first century (Second Nuclear Age), strategists and policy makers have an opportunity to assess the requirements of strategic stability and deterrence within the context and dynamics of an expanding global nuclear threat environment. During this period of transiting from a world of unipolarity to a multipolar strategic world order, strategists and decision-makers must assess the threats outside of a Cold War framework and address a number of complex issues that all nuclear powers, especially, the United States with its global interests and commitments will confront in a changing geostrategic and challenging threat environment emanating from a world of regional strategic multipolarity.

Indeed, the task of articulating a policy of strategic deterrence is complicated by the evolving nature of the geostrategic environment; an environment that has evolved from strategic bipolarity to unipolarity and now transiting to a strategic regional multipolar global threat environment. “The term “strategic multipolarity” refers to an international system in which an increasing number of smaller regional powers acquire nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction,”¹ providing them with influence and status all out of proportion to their actual military, economic and political capabilities, thereby constraining the behavior of a superpower like the United States or other major declared nuclear weapons states.

Within this context, United States strategists and decision makers must answer the question of whether the current United States’ approach to strategic deterrence in an expanding regional strategic multipolar threat environment is based on a geostrategic illusion or strategic reality. This paper will seek to provide insight into this question by discussing the following:

- The question of strategic deterrence in a pre-strategic multi-polar world order.

- Reassessing the issues theorized by the noted nuclear theorist Richard Rosecrance in his 1975 publication, *“Strategic Deterrence Reconsidered,”* more than three decades ago and assesses its applicability to the current debate.
- Examine the challenges and strategic choices confronting regional powers in a world of strategic regional multipolarity.

Any analysis of this nature must begin with a brief retrospective review of strategic nuclear deterrence in the bipolar world of the Cold War decades. Indeed, “The calculus of deterrence that emerged from the Cold War decades reflected conceptual narrowness because “strategic deterrence” was conceived and evolved in a bipolar international environment dominated by two disparate ideologically-oriented superpowers,”² nevertheless, this same calculus of deterrence requires rethinking the logic of deterrence in a world of regional strategic multipolarity.

In the twenty-first century world of strategic multipolarity, the question concerns the impact of horizontal nuclear proliferation and national strategic choices facing a number of regional states in their decisions to pursue, use and/or acquisition of nuclear weapons. In the strategic bipolar threat environment of the Cold War decades each of the opposing superpowers were armed with the destructive potential of not only destroying each other but quite possibly human society. The strategic bipolar nature of the international order that characterized the Cold War decades were a reaction to the destructive potential of nuclear weapons for nuclear weapons and the rise to superpower status of the two ideologically opposed adversaries led to a new order. Indeed, the advent of nuclear weapons and their tremendous destructive potential changed the very logic of warfare.

In this strategic bipolar environment, the logic of classic warfare was indeed illogical for as the noted nuclear theorist, Bernard Brodie and other analysts argued “... the task of nuclear weapons...was not the traditional one of winning battlefield victories; rather, its main purpose was to dissuade the adversary’s decision-makers from undertaking the military venture in the first place.”³ Keith B.

Payne also argued that “Nuclear weapons had uprooted traditional notions of military strategy: their use could not contribute to anything worthy of the name of “Victory” because no national goal could be worth the cost of general war.”⁴

Nevertheless, given that the two superpowers existed in a condition of mutual assured destruction (MAD), the search for a nuclear strategy pitted the advocates of mutual assured destruction (MAD) against those advocating a Nuclear Utilization Targeting Strategy (NUTS), however, each shared the same assumption that rationality in the decision making process was based on a careful cost-benefit assessment and given the bipolar nature of the strategic threat environment, the logical conclusion was that a “generically rational opponent model” would simplify the complex process of devising a deterrence strategy during the Cold War decades.⁵

Indeed, the new logic of strategic deterrence in a bipolar threat environment, led some strategic thinkers to the fundamental assumptions that a “sensible rational opponent” existed and the threat of nuclear retaliation were a reliable basis for shaping the opponent’s behavior.”⁶ Over the past sixty years the debate over nuclear proliferation has been dominated by the realist or neorealist paradigm arguing that acquisition of nuclear weapons was the only appropriate response to a perceived existential threat.⁷

This paradigm dominated the debate during the Cold War when strategic bipolarity shaped the United States and the Soviet Union’s perceptions of deterrence policy and strategic force structuring. “The fundamental underlying assumptions were a reliable basis for shaping the opponent’s behavior. More important was the fact that within a world of strategic bipolarity, these assumptions also led to the logical conclusion that a generically rational opponent” model would simplify and make defense planning less complex.”⁸

In the aftermath of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet nuclear threat, a number of strategic analysts began to question the continued validity of the assumptions of the Assured Vulnerability Paradigm. Indeed, Keith B. Payne, a noted critic, characterized this period as the beginning of the second nuclear age, and rejected the assumption that a “generically rational opponent” model would

simplify the complex process of devising a deterrence strategy and make defense planning less complex.”⁹

Nevertheless with the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the demise of the Soviet Union, the strategic nuclear threat to the United States cease to exist and in the minds of a number of strategic analysts, strategic deterrence was meaningless. Indeed,” twenty-five years ago, Francis-Fukuyama advanced the notion that, with the death of Communism, history had come to an end. “¹⁰ Other analysts argued that great power conflicts were things of the past and the logic of MAD as a deterrence strategy was unnecessary, since the threat of nuclear annihilation was non-existence. Moreover, other analysts argued that even if the strategic nuclear threat reappeared, the assumption was that the “generically rational opponent model of deterrence would suffice to deter any potential challenger.

“While the historical record may indeed, suggest that this assumption worked in a world of strategic bipolarity “... the question confronting post-Cold War analysts is whether the assumption of a generically rational opponent model will remain valid in a world of strategic multipolarity?”¹¹ Thus, “The proliferation of nuclear weapons and delivery systems threatens to restrict U.S. options in future conflicts. It may be increasingly difficult to act militarily without risking escalation to nuclear war.”¹² While the strategic conditions of the two nuclear armed superpowers in the strategic bipolar environment of the twentieth century, resembled one of bottled scorpions, in a world of strategic multipolarity, that image may best be represented by two large scorpions surrounded by several smaller, yet just as deadly scorpions.¹³

Under conditions of strategic multipolarity with numerous scorpions to contend with, diverse factors, such as leaders’ risk-taking propensities, the impact of culture and religion on decision-making and the statesman’s perceptions of strategic realities, while not a major element of strategic analysis during the bipolar era of the Cold War now are a critical part of the strategic calculations.

Indeed, in the twenty-first century world of regional strategic multipolarity, the question regarding the impact of horizontal nuclear proliferation and national

survival may suggest a rethinking of the unthinkable and a reassessment of the strategic choices facing a number of regional states such as Israel, Pakistan, India, North Korea and potentially a nuclear armed Iran, in their decisions to pursue, use and/or acquisition of nuclear weapons.

Despite the fact that the dangers of a major conflict among the great powers has decline, war as a means of solving regional disputes has not and while the United States has and most likely will maintain an unchallenged conventional military superiority to those potential adversaries, the reality is that illusions of security and global order based on conventional military force projection will be challenged by regional nuclear armed states.

Nevertheless, a critique of the new challenges to strategic deterrence in a world of strategic multipolarity received insufficient analysis as emphasis shifted to reliance on the superiority of United States conventional military forces and the growing perception that Great Power conflicts had ceased and strategic deterrence was meaningless.

THE QUESTION OF STRATEGIC DETERRENCE IN A PRE-STRATEGIC MULTIPOLAR WORLD ORDER

While the world is not yet multipolar, it is no longer unipolar as it had been from the time of the Soviet Union's collapse to the end of the 1990s...What we have today is a world in transition. This may appear to some as a nonpolar world in which multiple engagements between and among actors have become a strategic imperative.¹⁴

In the current period of transiting to a world of regional strategic multipolarity, the potential for conflict between great powers are diminishing, nevertheless, given the nature of international politics and the fact that conflict between states may occur in the future, statesmen must assess the key issues that will be a part of the future strategic landscape and think seriously about the role of strategic nuclear deterrence and devise a coherent strategy to meet the challenges of a twenty-first century world of strategic multipolarity.

Therefore, of critical concern for the major declared nuclear weapons states will be to accomplish the delicate task of creating an international security order that is conducive to drastic reductions in strategic nuclear forces and the creation of a stable world order, for the challenges facing the United States and the other major nuclear weapons states is eventually one of adjusting to a strategic multipolar threat environment.

The facts are that the international system has undergone drastic changes since the decades of the Cold War and in reality the major nuclear powers will be confronted with a number of smaller geo-strategically located regional nuclear powers' that will pose challenges constraining not only the United States but other nuclear powers' ability to influence or intervene in events in their regions.

Indeed, the evolving strategic realities are simply that strategic multipolarity is inevitable and the nuclear armed great powers (e.g. United States, Russia, China, France and Great Britain) will of necessity have to adjust their deterrence calculations as necessary. Within that context, Americans strategists must understand the changing realities, for in a world of regional strategic multipolarity and continued horizontal proliferation the number of regional states that acquire nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD) will pose several complex issues regarding providing for strategic deterrence and stability. Issues confronting strategic planners and decision makers in a twenty-first century world of strategic multipolarity are also complicated by a reduction in the numbers of deployed strategic nuclear weapons as provided by the New START Treaty.

However, this agreement between the United States and Russia still reflect a bipolar and Cold War mindset for the complexities and requirements of strategic deterrence in a strategic multipolar international environment where new geo-strategically located regional powers acquire strategic nuclear weapons will require a multilateral or multinational approach to arms control treaties.

These challenges will surely confront the major declared nuclear weapons states in light of further reductions in deployed strategic nuclear forces. Indeed, policymakers and strategic analysts should be encouraged to visualize the context

in which they may have to choose between two or more bad options, for as Colin S. Gray, Professor of International Politics and Strategic Studies at the University of Reading, U.K. suggest:

*Counsels of perfection are impossible to realize, and therefore irrelevant...But the most fundamental fact about defence policy and its associated programs of military capabilities is that it seeks to provide answers to questions that have yet to be posed.*¹⁵

It is therefore necessary for strategic analysts to peer into the future and examine issues that will confront decision makers in the event that further proliferation among key geo-strategically located regional powers continues. Given the two decade long strategic nuclear intellectual holiday and what appeared to be the onset of nuclear amnesia within the nuclear deterrence military and academic communities, the question is does the United States have the intellectual capacity to provide answers posed by the challenges of providing strategic deterrence and stability in an evolving regional strategic multipolar threat environment?

It remains however, to be seen that given the two decades of this strategic nuclear intellectual holiday, whether or not the new generation of strategists, and decision makers can adapt to the new strategic multipolar threat environment. For the next generation of strategic planners and decision makers in the second nuclear age, there will be no strategic nuclear holiday, for as Keith B. Payne suggest, "This is a very new deterrence ballgame for the United States and there is no basis for assertions that old rules will apply

Clearly, during the decades of the strategic nuclear holiday, strategic planners have had the advantage of a U.S. with superior conventional military capabilities and did not have to confront the challenges of a world of strategic regional multipolarity and its potential complexities. Thus, "Attempts to justify continued confidence in deterrence typically go no further than the assertions rogue leaders will be "rational," just as the Soviets were during the Cold War. And just as assuredly, rogue leaders will prove conveniently reasonable and thus deferrable."¹⁶

However, as David Ochmanek and Lowell H. Schwartz, caution in their RAND Study, “The Challenge of Nuclear-Armed Regional Adversaries,”

*This golden era of conventional power projection may be coming to a close in important parts of Eurasia. If the United States and its allies cannot find ways to neutralize small arsenals of nuclear weapons or prevent them from being delivered to targets outside their home countries, they will have to accept that military operations to impose regime change must be reserved for situations of only the direct sort.*¹⁷

Recently, an awareness of the effects of this two decade long intellectual nuclear holiday has been addressed by a number of strategic analysts arguing for a reassessment of the implications of its effects on decision-making in the United States. One might argue that the consequences of the two decade long nuclear intellectual holiday following the end of the Cold War have not prepared our decision makers and analysts to confront the challenges of a regional strategic multipolar world.¹⁸

Indeed, given the recent awareness of the complexity of providing strategic deterrence in a potential regional strategic multipolar threat environment, we must have a new awakening and sufficient resources and analysts to confront the complex challenges of the second decade of the twenty-first century. And yet, as Professor Colin S. Gray suggest, we must have the ability to “seek to provide answers to questions that have yet to be posed.”¹⁹

REASSESSING THE ISSUES: STRATEGIC DETERRENCE RECONSIDERED

With the Cold war over U.S. national security strategy has shifted its focus away from the former Soviet Union and toward possible U.S. regional involvements As a consequence, virtually all fundamental elements of U.S. strategy which were developed during the Cold War should be reevaluated. ²⁰

To understand the potential challenges of a world of strategic regional multipolarity, we must revisit the issues theorized by the noted nuclear theorist Richard Rosecrance in his 1975 publication “*Strategic Deterrence Reconsidered*”

more than three decades ago. While some analysts would argue that the Cold War era offer no analyses that are relevant to today's evolving challengers, Rosecrance's analysis does offer some guidance to the potential challenges facing the declared nuclear powers in this the second decade of the twenty-first century as we transition to a world of strategic multipolarity.

While the international system has indeed, undergone drastic changes since the decades of the seventies and in reality can best be described as transiting from a unipolar world to one of strategic multipolarity; that process started when the People's Republic of China (PRC) acquired nuclear weapons and joined the ranks of the declared nuclear weapons states.

Indeed, by 1975, Rosecrance's concerns had shifted to the question of stability in a multipolar context. His concerns were "How would deterrence theoretically and practically be achieved in such an environment?"²¹ Rosecrance caution that:

*...the expansion of the nuclear club also brings into prominence and power nations which are somewhat dissatisfied with the existing order than is the current membership. If Pakistan [currently a nuclear weapons state] and a number of Arab nations acquire strategic weapons, they may be more willing to use or threaten nuclear force to upset the current balance in South Asia and the Middle East.*²²

If Rosecrance's analysis of the characteristics of a strategic multipolar world is correct, strategists and defense planners must refrain from thinking solely within the framework of a Cold War model; rather engage in assessing the threats within a framework of a future world of strategic multipolarity with specific attention to the complexities of dealing with threats from nuclear armed regional adversaries. Thus, "accordingly, Western strategists will want to understand the ways in which nuclear weapons might affect the behavior of regional adversaries in peacetime, crisis, and conflict, and assess the likely ramification of this development for U.S. security and defense planning."²³

David Ochmanek and Lowell H. Schwartz, author of the RAND Study, *“The Challenge of Nuclear –Armed Regional Adversaries,”* also suggested, “The problem is that the regional adversaries likeliest to come into serious conflict with the United States and its regional allies or partners—North Korea and Iran—either have nuclear weapons or have the potential to acquire them.”²⁴

In a world of regional strategic multipolarity and continued horizontal proliferation the number of regional states that acquire nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction (WMD) will pose several complex issues regarding providing for strategic deterrence and stability. Rosecrance starts his analysis with a number of observations regarding the complexities of deterrence in a world of strategic multipolarity. He observed that:

*The relatively familiar problems of strategic bipolarity seem simple compared to the uncertainties of a multipolar world. A world in which a number of states, perhaps many, have access to strategic weapons systems becomes very complicated for a variety of reasons.*²⁵

“First, political disputes in a wider world context may be more serious than those in the traditional bipolar confrontation in Europe”²⁶

“Second, a multipolar strategic environment poses new questions of deterrence theory and practices. How much and what kind of nuclear capabilities to maintain if general deterrence is to exist? Almost inevitably as new powers are added to the nuclear club, differences in size and quality of nuclear forces will increase greatly.”²⁷

“Third, if this is true, deterrence will come to depend even more upon political factors and alignments than in bipolar cases. States facing deterrence deficiencies may seek to make them up through alliances or other political arrangements. How successful these will be, however, will depend on the strengths of the deterrent coalitions formed, their durability, and the position taken by the two superpowers.”²⁸

Rosecrance identified two critical challenges confronting those advocating a reduction to zero nuclear weapons along with a drastic reduction in the strategic

nuclear forces of the United States and other major declared nuclear weapons states today. He suggested that “unipolar stability cannot technically be attained unless each state or bloc is able to deter others from attacking.”²⁹

- At the extreme this means that each should be able to retaliate against any and all of the remaining powers in the system.
- More realistically, it requires that a state have the capacity to destroy or severely hurt any possible combination in the system.”³⁰

Rosecrance cautions that “Whether this is feasible in the strategic multipolar threat environment depends upon the sizes and technical characteristics of the deterrent forces.”³¹ Indeed, Rosecrance’s concerns are considerations to be factors into the current debate regarding sustaining the strategic nuclear triad.

Given the implications of these two challenges, the immediate task for strategic analysts is to conduct an assessment of the implications of Rosecrance’s analytical arguments in regards to providing strategic deterrence and stability during this period of transition. Indeed, if Rosecrance’s analysis is correct, is it realistic to assume that United States strategic planners and decision makers can ignore assessing Rosecrance’s concerns in light of the complexity of a strategic regional multipolar threat environment?

ROSECRANCE’S TWO CRITICAL CHALLENGES IN A REGIONAL STRATEGIC MULTIPOLAR THREAT ENVIRONMENT

Recall that Rosecrance suggested:

“multipolar stability cannot technically be attained unless each state or bloc is able to deter others from attacking.”³²

In a world of strategic multipolarity, even the issue of blocs or alliances of regional nuclear armed states will be a delicate and complicated one, for unless they are carefully formed, the world may indeed be faced with a condition that Henry Sokolski, Executive Director of the Nonproliferation Education Center (NPEC) described as a delicate alliance balance of regional nuclear armed states similar to that of the highly militarized alliance system of

1914. Indeed he suggested that the possible nuclear future offers 136 chances for strategic miscalculations; therefore, we must consider that in a world of regional strategic multipolarity strategists and policy makers may have to, in the words of Herman Khun, “think about the unthinkable,” or face the potential of a nuclear 1914.”³³

The point is that the evolving strategic realities are simply that some measure of strategic multipolarity is inevitable and as Rosecrance caution more than three decades ago:

*There is a final lesson here for the two superpowers, The United States and the Soviet Union [today, Russia]. A strategic multipolar world could be anarchic if the major powers do not co-operate to prevent the realization of its latent instabilities. Until now the spread of weapons has buttressed the détente and brought Moscow and Washington together. A further and more significant spread could reinforce super-power agreement.”*³⁴

In a world characterized as strategic multipolar, rather than bipolar, is it still possible that “The threaten intervention of one of the superpowers might prevent a small nuclear state from striving to exploit its advantages against an opponent?”³⁵ Given the current behavior of a number of nuclear weapons states, in fostering the spread of this technology, Rosecrance question of superpower cooperation may be more important today, after three decades; are the declared nuclear weapons states willing to police the new strategic environment in a world of strategic regional multipolarity?

Rosecrance also suggested:

*“At the extreme this means that each should be able to retaliate against any or all of the remaining powers in the system.”*³⁶

Thus, Rosecrance identified a critical element of the dilemma facing those advocating zero nuclear weapons and a drastic reduction in the nuclear force structure of the United States and other declared nuclear weapons states. He observed that “more realistically it requires that a state have the capacity to

destroy or severely hurt any possible combination of its likely enemies.”³⁷ Indeed, for those advocating drastic reductions in nuclear weapons, their strategic calculation regarding a strategic force structure required to insure some measure of strategic stability is critical, if indeed, reductions are to take place in a world of regional strategic multipolarity.

What then are the implications of Rosecrance’s analysis for strategic deterrence in the current strategic threat environment and how should United States defense planners and strategic analysts apply his assessment to the task of providing for strategic deterrence in this period of transition?

STRATEGIC REALITIES IN A WORLD OF REGIONAL STRATEGIC MULTIPOLARITY

Not only must Rosecrane’s three decade old assessment of strategic deterrence in a multipolar world be revisited; three additional issues will confront these new nuclear weapons states. Issues confronting strategic planners and decision makers in a twenty-first century world of strategic multipolarity are:

1. *Are the declared nuclear weapons states (United States, France, China, Russia and Great Britain) willing to permit a state or states of concern (previously designated as rogue states seeking nuclear weapons) to acquire the technologies and nuclear weapons arsenals to place them in a condition of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) vis-à-vis the major nuclear weapons states?*
2. This is also the challenge for the current geo-strategically located regional nuclear weapons states, (Israel vs, potential nuclear armed Iran, Pakistan vs. India and North Korea vs. U.S and allies).
3. A third issue is what options/actions should the regional nuclear states take to prevent this situation from occurring?

For the declared nuclear weapons states such as the United States, Russia, Great Britain, France and China, Question 1 may not be as threatening or time sensitive as states collocated within the potential regional strategic threat environment. However, both Questions 1, 2, and 3 are of critical concerns for a

number of states of the Middle East and North and South Asia. For example, in the cases of South Korea, Japan and Israel the issue of strategic deterrence is critical. Indeed, proximity to North Korea and a potentially nuclear armed Iran are of immediate security concerns of each country's decision makers.

However, the major nuclear weapons states must also consider that while the international system may currently resemble a world of pre-strategic multipolarity, with the potential of additional regional nuclear weapons states added to the deterrence calculations, for the regional nuclear states or those seeking to obtain nuclear weapons, proximity and the perception of a security dilemma are currently facing challenges that the declared nuclear weapons states may confront in the very near future. Thus, this transition period offers an opportunity to marshal all the elements of statecraft to meet the potential challenges to strategic deterrence in the coming decades of the twenty-first century.

Indeed, as Professor John Mearsheimer, Distinguished Professor of Political Science and Co-director of the Program on International Security Policy at the University of Chicago argues:

The sad fact is that international politics has always been a ruthless and dangerous business, and it is likely to remain that way. Although, the intensity of their competition waxes and wanes, great powers fear each other and always compete with each other for power. Which means gaining power at the expense of other states? But great powers do not merely seek to be the strongest of all the great powers, although that is a welcome outcome. Their ultimate aim is to be the hegemon---that is, the only great power in the system³⁸

Mearsheimer argues that great powers seek security in an international system characterized as anarchic in structure and it is essentially a self-help system, lacking a central authority to regulate state behavior, and this means that states can never be certain about another states intentions. Mearsheimer, concludes that given the very nature/structure of the international system, "In

the nuclear age great powers must have a nuclear deterrent that can survive a nuclear strike against it, as well as formidable conventional forces.”³⁹

If this applies to the declared nuclear weapons states and other great powers, surely it would be illogical to assume that at some point those states suffering the security dilemma would not seek to acquire sufficient deterrence capabilities to survive in a strategic regional multipolar threat environment. While the current national strategy debate in the United States focus on the economic concerns for future defense policy and strategic force structuring, the implications for adapting our strategic nuclear forces to a world of regional strategic multipolarity does not seem to be a part of that debate.

While the current strategic threat environment does not consist of regional armed nuclear states with the capacity to threaten the United States or the other four declared nuclear weapons states, nevertheless, a future world of strategic nuclear multipolarity may pose such a threat.

Indeed, James M. Lindsay and Ray Takeyh argued in their March/April 2010 Foreign Affairs article, *“After Iran Gets the Bomb: Containment and Its Complications,”*

*Detering Iran from using or threatening to use nuclear weapons would present a different set of challenges. So long as Iran lacks the ability to strike the United States with a nuclear-tipped missile, the United States can credibly threaten to retaliate militarily if Iran uses or threaten to use a nuclear bomb against anyone. But that could change if Iran develops long-range missiles. Tehran might also try to deter the United States by threaten to attack Europe, which would raise well-known concerns about the viability of so-called expended deterrence.*⁴⁰

Indeed, in his statement to the Senate Government Affairs Committee, Robert D. Walpole, National Intelligence Officer for Strategic and Nuclear Program testified;

Acquiring long-range ballistic missiles armed with weapons of mass destruction will increase the possibility that weaker countries could deter, constrain, and harm the United States. The missiles need not be deployed in large numbers. They need not be highly accurate or reliable; their strategic value is derived from the threat of their use, not the near certain of such use.⁴¹

Given the realities of the strategic regional nuclear threat environment, those advocating a minimum deterrence strategy, further reductions of strategic nuclear forces and eliminating the strategic nuclear triad should reexamine all of the challenges theorized by Richard Rosecrance, more than three decades ago. While the United States and the other declared nuclear weapons states are reducing the size of their nuclear arsenals, this does not mean that all of the nuclear armed states (specifically China) will follow their lead.

The fact is that strategic deterrence no longer exists in a bipolar threat environment and contemporary nuclear threats may emanate from a complex mix of actors. Moreover, with the continued technological development of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles the issue of providing strategic deterrence in a period of transition to a world of regional strategic multipolarity remains essential for United States strategists and policy makers while they ponder the future role of strategic nuclear deterrence.

In the final analysis, the major declared nuclear weapons states are not currently threatened by the issues of Question One; that is “*Are the declared nuclear weapons states (United States, France, China, Russia and Great Britain) willing to permit a state or states of concern (previously designated as rogue states seeking nuclear weapons) to acquire the technologies and nuclear weapons arsenals to place them in a condition of Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD) vis-à-vis the major nuclear weapons states?*” However, the current and future threats confronting a number of currently geo-strategically located regional states are a different situation.

THE CHALLENGE FOR THE CURRENT GEO-STRATEGICALLY LOCATED REGIONAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS STATES

The regions where the combination of the historical antagonisms and access to nuclear technology may create a desire for national leaders to acquire nuclear weapons for regime survival or a desire to seek regional hegemony, the question of a choice is between one or more bad options---a policy of MAD or NUTS. This dilemma is reflected in the following statement by Avner Cohen. Cohen suggested that the dilemma for Israel is:

Were we to believe in mutual nuclear deterrence [MAD], we would be able to see that a nuclear Iran is something that can be lived with. But we are aware of an asymmetry, whose gist is: We are a smaller and more vulnerable country, so even if everyone understands that we are the most advanced and strongest nuclear state [in the region]-a nuclearized Middle East is not in our interest.⁴²

For those regional states in geo-strategic located regions, Questions 1,2 and 3 are of critical concerns, especially those co-located within the potential regional strategic threat environment of the Middle East and North and South East Asia.

Question 2: This is also the challenge [**Question 1**] *for the current geo-strategically located regional nuclear weapons states, (Israel vs. Potential nuclear armed Iran, Pakistan vs. India and North Korea vs. U.S. and allies. Question 3, a third issue is what options should the regional nuclear armed states take to prevent this situation from occurring?*

Professor P.R. Chari, Visiting Professor at the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies (IPCS) of New Delhi argues that “Nuclear deterrence has different connotations for both countries [India and Pakistan]. India believes that nuclear deterrence permits a defensive strategy being pursued to assure its national integrity, Pakistan, on the other hand believes that nuclear deterrence enables its pursuits of an offensive strategy by using military and terrorism as the instruments of an activist foreign policy.”⁴³

Therefore, a national policy of mutual assured destruction (MAD) appears to have been an effective means of maintaining some measure of strategic stability at the nuclear level in Northwest Asia. Nevertheless, Timothy Wesymeyer and Yogesh Joshi noted:

As Pakistan advanced its nuclear weapons program in the early 1990s, sub-conventional provocations and nuclear deterrence become intertwined in what Dr. S. Paul Kapur, professor at the U.S. Naval Postgraduate School has called the instability-instability paradox. Contrary to the stability-instability paradox presented during the U.S.-Soviet deterrent relationship where stability at the strategic level allowed instability for lower – intensity conflict in proxy threaten possible; Kapur writes that in South Asia: “ongoing violence has resulted from a significant possibility of sub-nuclear conflict escalating to the nuclear threshold. Thus, a substantial degree of instability at the strategic level has encouraged lower level South Asian violence.”⁴⁴

Whereas the potential of a nuclearized Middle East presents a complex series of historical and regional dilemmas in regards to national leaders choosing between the options of a national policy of MAD or NUTS (warfighting), Michael Raska, an Associate Research Fellow at the Institute of Defense and Strategic Studies, writes that an Iranian acquisitions of nuclear weapons would in theory leave Israeli decision-makers with the following strategic options.

1. Israel maintains status-quo by keeping its nuclear opacity intact.
2. Israel accepts nuclear parity, shifts to a declaratory status based on mutual assured destruction (MAD) strategy.
3. Israel shifts to a policy of minimum credible deterrence in the form of a “recessed deterrence---no-first use/second strike capacity.”
4. Israel resorts to international arms control regime or pursues denuclearization of the Middle East.⁴⁵

Which of the strategic options Israel will pursue remains to be seen, however, Raska writes that his analysis suggests that Israeli decision-makers will choose between option 2 and 3.

*Option 2: "Israel accepts nuclear parity, shift to declaratory status based on Mutual Assured Destruction (MAD). Israel declares a "ready arsenal" (launch on warning); a second-strike nuclear capability; and devises a nuclear war-fighting doctrine. Israel may switch to an open nuclear posture, yet, with multiple options requirements."*⁴⁶

Iran's acquisition of even a small nuclear arsenal introduces a condition of regional strategic concerns, in that a bipolar mutual assured destruction (mini-MAD) condition would exist between Iran and Israel. Absence, further horizontal nuclear proliferation, this condition of mutual assured destruction might create a condition this author suggests is the concept of nuclear induced rationality.

That is prior to a determined nuclear aspirant acquires even a small nuclear capability, that state is subjected to charges of irrational and dangerous behavior. The leaders of these rogue states are seen as engaging in activities that are indeed deemed to be irrational by all measures of a western oriented description of rational behavior. However, history has shown that once the nuclear aspirant acquires even a small nuclear arsenal, it appears that those advocating the antiproliferation option, shift their policies and rhetoric to one of acceptance and the leaderships of the former irrational and dangerous rogue states are viewed as rational actors.

Indeed, nuclear induced rationality seems to affect the decision makers of both the established nuclear weapons states and the aspiring new nuclear power. As John Mueller has argued: *"In this, they [antiproliferations] would remain mindful of historical experience, which strongly suggests that new nuclear countries---even ones that once seemed to be hugely threatening, like China in 1964---have been content to use their weapons for purpose of prestige and deterrence even while discovering them to be very considerable waste of time, money, effort, and scientific talent."*⁴⁷

Keith B. Payne cites the following statement of Mao Zedong as an historical illustration regarding rationality, nuclear war, and its potential impact on China.

Mao made public and private statements that reflected a shocking callous disregard for prospective Chinese nuclear war casualties and again contradict 'rationality' as narrowly defined in balance of terror tenets. He reportedly described the prospective loss of hundreds of millions of Chinese lives in a nuclear war with the United States as "no great loss."⁴⁸

Payne provides other examples of the seemingly irrationality of Mao regarding nuclear war. He cites the following statement by Mao, "Even if the U.S. atom bombs...were dropped on China, blasted a hole in the Earth or blew to pieces, this might be a big thing for the solar system, but it would still be an insignificant matter as far as the universe as a whole is concerned."⁴⁹

Mao, however, was one of those irrational rogue leaders that after acquiring a small nuclear arsenal suddenly became rational in regards to the impact of nuclear war on China's future. Indeed, it seems that China's leaders suddenly acquired an ability to engage in rational decision making regarding nuclear weapons policy. Not only did the Chinese leadership become rational in their decision making process regarding nuclear weapons, the western powers assessment of the rationality of the Chinese leadership shifted and was reflected in the following statement:

While Mao's decision making and behavior could be reckless and inhumane, it is not "irrational" per se; he followed a specific logic that linked his actions and goals. But he certainly appears to have held to a set of values and judgments far outside the narrow definition of "rational" informing the balance of terror tenets.⁵⁰

Further historical evidence of nuclear induced rationality on the part of decision makers is reflected by recent released documents from the 1960s.

The issue of the changing perception of rationality on the part of rogue state leaders may also influence the strategies and policies of the declared nuclear weapons states. For example, was it rational for both the United States and the Soviet Union to plan or contemplate

*using military force to destroy the fledging nuclear facilities of the People's Republic of China during the 1960s?*⁵¹

Dr. K. R. Bolton revealed in his May 17, 2010 article, Sino-Soviet-US Relations and the 1969 Nuclear Threat, "...a Chinese expose that has informed an undoubtedly surprise world that in 1969 the USSR wished to settle its historical score with China and launch a nuclear attack. The USSR merely wanted an assurance of U.S. neutrality. Far from the USA welcoming this de-clawing of the growing dragon, it instead threatened that there would be retaliation from the U.S. against Russia."⁵²

In the case of North Korea and its nuclear program it would appear that the "Strangle the Baby in the Cradle" moment has passed for the international community. The case of Iran remains a challenge; however, all indications are that they will continue their quest for regional nuclear power status. Given Avner Cohen's description of Israel predicament regarding Iran as a regional nuclear state, the prospects of regional nuclear deterrence, and the potential mini-MAD condition between the two, the question is whether the concept of nuclear induced rationality can become a part of the strategic calculations in a nuclearized Middle East.

Options 3: Israel shifts to a policy of minimum credible deterrence in the form of a "recessed deterrence"—no first use/second strike capability.

This condition of mini-MAD would also allow Israeli decision makers the option of developing a strategic force structure based on minimum deterrence. As Raska suggest, "...Israel's nuclear doctrine would then underline a policy of no-first use; its nuclear configuration would have to guarantee a sufficient capability for a second-strike that would cause unacceptable damage to the enemy."⁵³

In rejecting this option Raska argues that, "Given Israel's geostrategic constraint, however, this option is unlikely given the risks of preemptive first strike on Israel."⁵⁴ Moreover, to develop a policy of minimum deterrence with counterforce targeting strategies would not prevent the destruction of Israel as a nation. Counterforce targeting by an adversary (i.e. nuclear armed Iran) would,

given, the geo-strategic and compact nature of Israel would lead to essentially a city – destruction strategy (countervalue) even though that adversary may profess a city-avoidance targeting strategy.

However, when subjected to Rosecrance's two critical challenges in a regional strategic multipolar threat environment, the deterrence requirements and strategic force structuring criteria are quite complicated for both Israel or other Middle East states possessing or contemplating development of strategic nuclear forces for deterrence. When applying the Rosecrance criteria to the challenges facing a nuclear armed Iran or Israel, the very nature of the deterrence challenges may rule out the four options advanced by Michael Raska. For example, when applying Rosecrance's two challenges we find that:

Criteria 1: "...multipolar stability cannot technically be attained unless each state or bloc is able to deter others from attacking."

Given the current geo-strategic constraints that Israeli strategic planners have to contend with, the strategic options advanced by Michael Raska would offer a very low level of security for both Israel and Iran.

Regarding Rosecrance's second criteria:

Criteria 2: "...at the extreme this means that each should be able to retaliate against any or all the remaining powers in the system."

If Iran obtains even a small nuclear arsenal, the potential for a cascade of horizontal nuclear proliferation among the remaining Middle Eastern states would require both Iran and Israel to restructure their strategic forces, for "Changes in the nuclear capabilities or posture of one country can have cascading effects across a range of countries in different regions as a result of interconnected and overlapping strategic relationships. "⁵⁵

In regards to the complexity of the challenges facing Israel and the other states in the Middle East, the question remains, what are the strategic options for nuclear armed state in a strategic regional multipolar threat environment? For the new generation of strategists and decision makers seeking to understand and

adapt to the new regional strategic threat environment may find Vipin Narang's book, *Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era: Regional Powers and International Conflict*, in this writer's opinion an excellent source for adapting to the complexities of a regional strategic multipolar world.

Narang began his analysis by "suggest[ing] that scholars start by "analyzing the experiences of the regional nuclear powers, or the non-superpower states that have developed independent nuclear forces: China, India, Pakistan, Israel, South Africa, and France."⁵⁶ While Narang analysis may make important contributions to the new strategic analysts in the United States and the other declared nuclear states, it may also be valuable for the regional nuclear powers contemplating the nature of the threats in their immediate strategic threat environment.

Narang advanced a *Posture Optimization Theory* which focus on the following:

- Which nuclear posture have regional powers adopted and why?
- Identifying the diverse nuclear postures adopted by regional powers and why?
- Proposed a new theory for analyzing the major factors that may explain strategic choices regarding the acquisition, force structuring, and doctrine.⁵⁷

The Posture Optimization Theory is important in that it is an approach that is focused on the important issues that were absent from the debates during the decades of the United States nuclear intellectual holiday. According to Narang, "It is an attempt to "explain why the existing regional nuclear powers have adopted the nuclear postures and strategies they have, and generate testable predictions about what type of nuclear posture future regional nuclear powers might adopt based on a set of readily observable variable."⁵⁸

The immediate value of Narang's Posture Optimization Theory is that it is an attempt to accomplish Professor Colin S. Gray's challenge for strategists, defense analysts, and policy makers, "...the most fundamental fact about defence policy and the associated programs of military capabilities is that it seeks to provide answers to questions that have yet to be posed."⁵⁹ Narang suggests that the

Posture Optimization Theory will “provide a plausible framework with which to explain the choices of existing regional powers and to predict the choices that future nuclear powers might make.”⁶⁰

One should be aware that when considering the complexity of the challenges of assessing strategic deterrence in a strategic multipolar regional threat environment, one must be reminded that the task was quite simple in the bipolar Cold War decades between two nuclear armed superpowers. Moreover, one must also consider that given the proximity of the geo-strategically located regional powers in the Middle East and North and South East Asia, the assessment of the threat to these regimes is viewed as time sensitive and very critical.

In this sense, Narang’s Posture Optimization Theory is also designed to confront the critical questions facing the regional strategists and decision makers in choosing the type of deterrence and the task of structuring their nuclear forces for their specific geo-strategic threat environment.

While it is not the intent of this paper to analyze Narang’s theory in detail, rather it is to suggest that his work is important in redressing the negative implications of the decades of U.S. nuclear intellectual holiday and seeks to address the complexities of providing strategic deterrence in an evolving and dynamic threat environment from the perspective of the geo-strategically located regional strategists.

Narang reminds us as does Professor John J. Mearsheimer that “States care more about what an adversary can credibly do with its nuclear weapons than what it says about them.”⁶¹ In this sense, he uses the term “nuclear posture” to refer to the capabilities (actual nuclear forces), employment doctrine (under conditions they might be used), and command-in- control procedures (how they managed, deployed, and potentially released), a state establishes to operationalize its nuclear weapons capabilities.”⁶²

He further states that the Posture Optimization Theory is the first comparative theory of regional power nuclear postures drawing on the insights from the neoclassical realist school of international relations.”⁶³

- **Catalytic Posture**, which consist of only a handful of nuclear weapons, threatens the explicit breakout of nuclear weapons in the event the state's survival is threaten in order to compel---third-party intervention on the state's behalf.
- **Assured Retaliation Posture**, involves the development of secure second-strike nuclear capabilities that enable a state to threaten certain nuclear retaliation should it suffer primarily a nuclear strike.
- **Asymmetric Escalation Posture** develops capabilities and procedures that credibly enable the rapid and first use of nuclear weapons in the event of a conventional attack.⁶⁴

For some geo-strategically located states, proximity is critical in their decisions to acquire nuclear weapons. As Narang argues, "States that pursue nuclear weapons do so because they face some baseline level of security threat, but there is certainly scope for variation in the immediacy and severity of those threats. Some regional nuclear powers may face existential threats, whereas others may face more latent security pressures that motivated their nuclear weapons programs."⁶⁵

When Narang applied his Posture Optimization Theory to Pakistan, India, Israel, China, France and South Africa, the results for predicting future behavior are encouraging. However, "The only major misprediction is post-1991 Israel, which the theory anticipated should have adopted an asymmetric escalation posture. In fact, Israel has adopted an assured retaliation posture since 1991."⁶⁶

Briefly, the Posture Optimization Theory predicted that in regards to the two regional nuclear states in Asia, India and Pakistan, India's strategists and decision makers chose the Assured Retaliation Posture in 1974 and Pakistan chose the Catalytic Posture from 1986 to 1991 and shifted to the Asymmetric Escalation Posture from 1991 to the present. Israel, however, embraced a Catalytic Posture strategy (1966-1990) and shifted to an Assured Retaliation Posture (1991-Present).

While Narang's Posture Optimization Theory provides a framework for improving, regional strategists and decision makers analysis, each must apply Rosecrance's and Narang's analysis to their specific strategic regional threat environment. He suggest that his "theory provides a template for how to think about how and why emerging nuclear powers might select their postures, providing testable implications for the type of posture countries such as North Korea or Iran, as well as those that follow, might select.

Using Posture Optimization Theory, Narang suggest that Iran given its lack of a reliable third-party sponsor, a suitable proximate offensive threat and the very nature of its civil-military structure should select either a assured retaliation posture (e.g. China or India) or adopt an asymmetric escalation posture (e.g. Pakistan).⁶⁷ "If the latter, the region could face a conflict dynamic where the pressing issues are arsenal security and management, and possible Iranian embodiment as observed in the Pakistani case."⁶⁸

Finally, Narang caution that:

" By understanding the pressures that states in this position face, however, the international community and regional adversaries have the option to take steps to ameliorate the variables that force states into an asymmetric escalation posture, either by taking steps to reduce the severity of the state's security environment or by recognizing that these states may operationalize their nuclear forces in potentially risky ways and providing negative-control and management assistance to reduce the risks of accidental or unauthorized nuclear use."⁶⁹

Thus, there appears to be ample evidence, as discussed in the previous pages that the issues of strategic deterrence should be reexamined within the context of a perceived regional strategic multipolar threat environment and it remains to be seen if the current U.S. approach to strategic deterrence in an expanding regional strategic multipolar threat environment is based on a geostrategic illusion or strategic reality?

The current debate over budgetary support for the sustainment of the strategic nuclear triad and adopting a minimal deterrence strategy supporting a continued reduction in the numbers of strategic nuclear weapons have all the earmarks of a debate lacking an understanding of the nature of the evolving strategic threat environment. In that regards, Dereck D. Smith advise, *“Without a strong understanding of the varying motivations behind rogue [or states of concern] development of WMD, a standardize response to proliferation runs the risk of not disarming the most dangerous states, or attempting to disarm those better left alone.”*⁷⁰

He offers the following advice for U.S. strategists and decision makers facing the challenges of planning for a world of regional strategic multipolarity.

*The trouble is that the United States does not have a clear sense of the goals of most rogue states. It may be that their leaders seek weapons of mass destruction (WMD) for largely protective purposes, intending only to threaten their use. Unlike suicide bombers, such states may seek to portray themselves as defensively suicidal, like a national landmine primed to detonate and injury the trespasser as well as destroy itself.*⁷¹

For those analysts seeking to understand what may motivate regional powers to acquire or deploy nuclear weapons, it may be instructive to examine the nature of the motivating factors of a number of key geo-strategically located regional powers for their views of the strategic threat in their regions.

Indeed, Robert R. Sandoval may have captured a major motivating factor in his article, *“Consider the Porcupine: Another View of Nuclear Proliferation, “... with the defense of its borders entrusted to forces structured around the firepower of nuclear weapons any nation not now a nuclear power, and not harboring ambitions for territorial aggrandizement, could walk like a porcupine through the forests of international affairs: no threat to its neighbors, too prickly for predators to swallow.”*⁷²

However, as Sandoval caution, *“How to approach these dangerous situations, when the world community may simple not be able to leave the*

porcupines of the forest alone, is the main challenge,”⁷³ for given the security dilemma and the very natures of the international system, is it prudent to risk such a situation developing?

As Vipin Narang suggest, the United States and the other declared nuclear weapons states must understand that in seeking to develop strategies for dealing with the challenges emerging in a world of strategic regional multipolarity:

The emerging nuclear powers in the world will all be regional powers, faced with the challenge of operationalizing limited nuclear forces under potentially unstable domestic and international constraints. They will maneuver below the superpowers, confronting different strategic consideration and options that more closely resemble those presented to China, India, Pakistan, France, Israel, and South Africa⁷⁴.

If, indeed, U.S. strategists and defense planners have turn their attention to these issues, it would be prudent to suspect that regional strategic nuclear powers are also considering the advantages of acquiring what would appear to be an ultimate weapon to fend off what they view as an existential threat to their regime survival?

The current debate regarding articulating a policy of strategic deterrence for the United States is complicated by the dynamic and changing nature of the contemporary geostrategic environment that has evolved from strategic bipolarity to unipolarity and now transiting to a strategic regional multipolar global threat environment. Despite this potential transition, the debate would appear to be dominated by those arguing that the United States should adopt a “minimum deterrence” strategy and those advocating a nuclear force structure that is adaptable for deterrence and assurance.

Advocates of a minimum deterrence strategy supported President Obama’s call for a reduction in the U.S. nuclear arsenal, which they agree leave the United States with roughly 1000 nuclear weapons or less. In the current debate, a leading critic of minimum deterrence strategy is Professor Keith B. Payne, Professor of

Defense and Strategic Studies and former Commissioner, Congressional Commission on the Strategic Posture of the United States.

Testifying before the United States House of Representatives Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, March 2013, he presented the following:

For the past four decades there have been periodic proposals within the U.S. for deep reductions in the U.S. nuclear arsenal. These proposals almost always promote an approach to deterrence and U.S. force sizing that has come to be known as Minimum Deterrence.

The basic Minimum Deterrence argument is that nuclear weapons are so lethal that a small number is adequate for deterrence, and will be so in the future. Consequently, the fundamental Minimum Deterrence claim is that we can make deep nuclear reductions without jeopardizing deterrence.

The number of deployed nuclear weapons typically recommended in Minimum Deterrence proposals range from 100 to 1000. The Global Zero Commission's report, for example, recommended 450 deployed weapons now and fewer in the future.⁷⁵

In light of Richards Rosecrance's two critical challenges discussed in this paper, it would be prudent to apply those challenges to the current Minimum Deterrence arguments regarding reduction to the 100 to 1000 range of nuclear weapons and the argument for not sustaining the current nuclear triad of ICBMs, Long-ranged strategic bombers, and nuclear submarines. The question is can Rosecrance's criteria support the assumptions of the Minimum Deterrence supporters?

Even a cursory application of his two criteria would pose difficulties for the assumptions underpinning a Minimum Deterrence strategy. If, indeed, as Rosecrance suggested, "unipolar stability cannot technically be attained unless each state or bloc is able to deter others from attacking," and "at the extreme this means that each should be able to retaliate against any and all of the remaining powers in the system"⁷⁶ then, as Rosecrance concluded, "More realistically, it

requires that a state have the capacity to destroy or severely hurt any possible combination in the system,”⁷⁷

Given the potential for cascading horizontal nuclear weapons proliferation in the Middle East, and Iran develops a nuclear weapons arsenal, can the supporters of Minimum Deterrence reliably predict the outcome in advance? Moreover, how could those regional states and Europe cope with Rosecrance’s criteria that each should develop the capacity to retaliate against any and all of the remaining powers in the system, given the historical, religious, culture, and conflicting demands for security in the region?

Given the logic of the security dilemma facing those regional states in close proximity to potential adversaries, what strategic nuclear posture would they develop and what signals would each send to other states in the region? Indeed, would Narang’s Posture Optimization Theory provide insight for the regional nuclear weapons states decision makers and strategic planners to reliably cope with the complex challenges this situation would bring about? The point is that while the supporters of Minimum Deterrence focus on advancing this strategy for the United States, there seem to be a disconnect in that the United States is a global power with strategic interests around the world.

This would suggest that unless backers of Minimum Deterrence would opt for a United States grand strategy of retreat and near isolationism, “its advocacy for deep force reductions, no “new” US nuclear capabilities, and the application of US nuclear deterrence *only* to opponents’ nuclear threats (“sole purpose”) are likely to undermine the US capacity to deter opponents and assure allies.”⁷⁸

Indeed, what this writer find most disturbing is as Keith B. Payne suggest the “... logic underlying Minimum Deterrence proposals often reflects significant internal contradictions. In general, the Minimum Deterrence narrative is based upon explicit and optimistic hopes about opponent decision making and how deterrence will function. Those hopes reflect the projection of an informed, reasonable and prudent (per Western definition) worldview to all rational enemy leaderships despite the fact that available evidence demonstrates such expectations to be unduly optimistic.”⁷⁹

Moreover, those advocating a Minimum Deterrence strategy seem to be operating under the illusion that the natures of warfare and great powers objectives are static.⁸⁰ As the June 2014, Center for Strategic and International Security (CSIS) Study noted, "Warfare in the 21st century and in the decades moving forward will be affected by the rise of individual states, evolving technologies, and new environments. Through the United States is likely to remain the preeminent military power, the rising influence (and confidence) of states like China and Russia will continue to challenge the United States in areas where the nature of warfare is rapidly changing."⁸¹

In this regards, Vipin Narang's analysis is an excellent point of departure for unraveling the puzzles of the strategic choices facing regional states in their decisions to pursue, use and /or acquisition of nuclear weapons. Just as Rosecrance's three decade old analysis of deterrence in a strategic multipolar world still has relevance for today's strategic analysts, Narang's analysis must also be included in the current assessment of the challenges for strategic deterrence in a future world of regional strategic multipolarity.

In this regards, Vipin Narang's analysis is an excellent point of departure for unraveling the puzzles of the strategic choices facing regional states in their decisions to pursue, use and /or acquisition of nuclear weapons. Just as Rosecrance's three decade old analysis of deterrence in a strategic multipolar world still has relevance for today's strategic analysts, Narang's analysis must also be included in the current assessment of the challenges for strategic deterrence in a future world of regional strategic multipolarity.

¹ Willie Curtis, "The Assured Vulnerability Paradigm: Can It Provide a Useful Basis for Deterrence in a World of Strategic Multi-Polarity? Defense Analysis, Vol.16, No. 3, 2000, p.241.

² Ibid, I am also indebted to Professor Rodney Tomlinson, Professor of International Politics at the U.S. Naval Academy for assisting me in understanding the nature and importance of this condition.

³ J. Robert Oppenheimer, "Atomic Weapons and American Policy," Foreign Affairs, Vol. 31 No. 4, July 1953, p.529.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Willie Curtis, The Assured Vulnerability Paradigm, p.241.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ William C. Potter and Gaukhar Mukhatzhanova, "Forecasting Nuclear Proliferation in the 21st Century: The Role of Theory, These are, however, now important factors for Volume 1, (Stanford University Press, 2010), p. 2-3.

⁸ Willie Curtis, "The Assured Vulnerability Paradigm," p. 239.

⁹ Ibid., p. 240.

¹⁰ Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History?" National Interest, Summer 1989, pp. 3-18.

¹¹ Willie Curtis, "The Assured Vulnerability Paradigm. 242.

¹² Jerry Meyerle, "Nuclear Weapons and Coercive Escalation in Regional Conflicts: Lessons from North Korea and Pakistan," CAN Analysis & Solution, Washington, DC, September 2014, p. iii.

¹³ Ibid. J. Oppenheimer stated that "Over the past sixty plus years the debate over nuclear proliferation has been dominated by MAD in 1958: We may anticipate a way of affairs in which two great powers will each be in a position to put an end to the civilization and life of the other, though not without risking its own. We may liken to two scorpions in a bottle, each capable of killing the other, but only at the risk of its own life.

¹⁴ Chellaney, Brahma, "Perspective on a Multipolar World: Bridgebuilding on the Ganges: India's Ascent in a Rapidly Changing Global Order, p. 34.

¹⁵ Colin S. Gray, "Strategic Thought for Defence Planners," Survival, Vol. 52, No. 3, June-July, 2010, p. 160.

¹⁶ Keith B. Payne, "The Fallacies of Cold War deterrence and a New Direction," University Press of Kentucky, 2001., p. 87.

¹⁷ David Ochmanek and Lowell H. Schwartz, "Challenge of Nuclear Armed Regional Adversaries, (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2008), p. iii.

¹⁸ James M. Smith, "Limited Nuclear Conflict and the American Way of War," in "On Nuclear War in the 21st Century, edited by Jeffery A. Larsen and Kerry M. Kartchner, Stanford: Stanford Security Studies, Stanford University Press, 2014), P. 245. Further evidence of a nuclear intellectual holiday and its implications are provided by Dr. James M. Smith, Director, USAF Institute for National Security Studies (INSS), in a newly published book, "On Limited Nuclear War in the 21st Century. He offers a series of analysis of the current state of strategic nuclear thinking in the United States. Dr. Smith explains the problems created by this intellectual strategic nuclear holiday as "The imperative of more than a decade of fighting global extremism and other imperative of insurgency, civil war and issues at the lower end of the traditional spectrum of conflict formed the new experience base of the security community and dominate in the halls of academia, yet few programs provide focus on issues of strategic—and specifically nuclear policy, strategy, or the operational consideration of limited nuclear warfare." Dr. Smith also cautions, "Operational preeminence and tactical expertise and experience with other types of conflict may not be enough to insure national security in the face of the emerging threat environment."

¹⁹ Colin S. Gray, Strategic Thought for Defense Planners, P. 160.

²⁰ Dean Wilkening and Kenneth Watman, "Nuclear Deterrence in a regional Context," (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 1995), p. iii.

²¹ Richard Rosecrance, "Strategic Deterrence Reconsidered," Adelphi Paper, 116, The International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 1975, p. 2.

²² Ibid, p. 31.

²³ David Ochmanek and Lowell H. Schwartz, "The Challenge of Nuclear Armed Regional Adversaries," (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2008) p.iii.

²⁴ Ibid,

Graham Allison also suggested in his Foreign Affairs article, "Nuclear Disorder: Surveying Atomic Threats," that the current global nuclear order is extremely fragile, and the three most urgent challenges to it are North Korea, Iran and Pakistan. If North Korea and Iran become established nuclear weapons states over the next several years, the

nonproliferation regime will have been hollowed out. If Pakistan was to lose control over even one nuclear weapon that was ultimately used by terrorist that would change the world.”

²⁵ Rosecrance, *Strategic deterrence Reconsidered*, p. 27.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

³³³³³³ Henry Sokolski, “Nuclear 1914: The Worry Yet to Come: The Changing Face of proliferation,” Sandia’s Cooperative Monitoring Center for Strategic & International Studies, CMC International Programs Building, February 14-15, 2005. Henry Sokolski suggests, “The possible proliferation future offer q136 chances for strategic miscalculations.” Scott D. Sagan reminds us that, “Although the jury of history is still out on the consequences of further nuclear proliferation, and will be for some time, the emerging evidence from the nuclear proliferation world unfortunately supports this more pessimistic view.” In Scott D. Sagan and Kenneth N. Waltz, *The Spread of Nuclear Weapons: A Debate Renewed* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2002), p. 83.

³⁴³⁴ Rosecrance, p. 37.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, Updated Edition, (New York :W.W.Norton, 2010),p. 2.

³⁹ Ibid,p.5.

⁴⁰ James M. Linsey and Ray Takeyh, “After Iran Gets the Bomb: Containment and Its Complications,” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 2, March/April, 2010, p. 43.

⁴¹ Robert D. Walpole, “The Iranian Ballistic Missile and WMD Threat to the United States Through 2015,” Statement for the Record to the International Security, Proliferation and Federal Service Subcommittee of the Senate Government Affairs Committee, 21 September 2000, Washington, DC.

⁴² Eli Clifton, “Israel and Iran’s Shared Policy of Nuclear Ambiguity, <http://www.lobelog.com/israel-and-iran-sharded-policy-of-ambiguity/>.

⁴³ Timothy Westmyer and Yogesh Joshi, “What South Korea Can learn from South Asia’s Nuclear Experience,” *The Diplomat*, August 29, 2013. [TheDiplomat.com/2013/08/29/what-south-korea-can-learn-from-asias-nuclear-experience/3/?ptin](http://thediplomat.com/2013/08/29/what-south-korea-can-learn-from-asias-nuclear-experience/3/?ptin).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Michael Raska, “Iran’s Nuclear Conundrum: Israel’s Strategic Options,” RSIS Commentaries, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, p. 2.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ John Mueller, *Atomic Obsession: Nuclear Alarmism From Hiroshima to AL-Qaeda*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010),p. 157.

⁴⁸ Keith B. Payne, *The Great American Gamble: Deterrence Theory and Practice, from the Cold War to the Twenty-First Century*, (Fairfax: National Institute Press, 2008)p. 278>

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ William Burr and Jeffery T. Richelson, “Whether to “Strangle the Baby in the Cradle,”: The United States and the Chinese Nuclear Program, 1960-64, *International Security*, Vol. 25, No. 3 (Winter 2000/01),p. 54. Burr and Richelson observed “That Kennedy and his advisers considered using force against China’s nuclear facilities was first documented publicly by historian Gordon Chang in 1988. Burr and Richelson explained that “...declassified material discloses that high-level U.S. officials initiated contingency plans for air attacks on Beijing’s nuclear facilities...”

⁵² Dr. K.R. Bolton, “Sino-Soviet-US- Relations and the 1969 Nuclear Threat,” <http://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2010/05/17.sino-soviet-us-relations-and> -the 1969 nu...

⁵³ Michael Raska, "Iran's Nuclear Ambitions and Israel's Strategic Dilemmas," Middle East Insight, The Middle East Institute, National University of Singapore, p. 2.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Jerry Meyerte, "Nuclear Weapons and Coercive Escalation in Regional Conflicts: Lessons from North Korea and Pakistan," Washington DC, CAN Analysis & Solutions, September 2014, p. 9.

⁵⁶ Vipin Narang, Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era: Regional Powers and International Conflict, Princeton University Press, 2014, p.3.

⁵⁷ Ibid, p. 8.

⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 13.

⁵⁹ Colin S. Gray, "Strategic Thought for Defence Planners," p. 160.

⁶⁰ Vipin Narang, "Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era, p. 13.

⁶¹ Ibid., p. 4.

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 30.

⁶⁴ Ibid., p. 8.

⁶⁵ Ibid., p. 31.

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 301.

⁶⁷ Ibid, p.304-305.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p. 305.

⁶⁹ Ibid., p. 311.

⁷⁰ Derek D. Smith, "Deterring America: Rogue States and the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction," (Cambridge University Press, 2006) p.

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Ibid., For a critique of the "The Porcupine Theory of Nuclear Proliferation", see Louis Rene Beres' article: "The Porcupine Theory of Nuclear Proliferation: Shortening the Quills, Parameters, Journal of the US Army War College, Vol. IX, No 3.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 299.

⁷⁵ Dr. Keith B. Payne, Testimony Before the United States House of representatives, House Armed Services Committee, Subcommittee on Strategic Forces, March 19, 2013, p.1.

⁷⁶ Richard Rosecrance, "Strategic Deterrence Reconsidered," page 27.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Payne, p.5.

⁷⁹ Keith B. Payne, "Nuclear Force Adaptability for Deterrence and Assurance: A prudent Alternative to Minimum Deterrence," National Institute for Public Policy, 2014, p.1.

⁸⁰ For an analysis of "Restraint as a Realistic Grand Strategy, Michael Page's critique in CICERO Magazine, posted October 21, 2014 of Barry Posen is instructive for strategists and decision makers.

<http://ciceromagazine.com/reviews/is-restraint-a-sound-u-s-grand-strategy/>

⁸¹ Clark Murdock, Ryan Crotty and Angela Weaver, "Building the 2021 Affordable Military," Lanham: Center for Strategic and International Studies, June 2014, p.103.